(iv) Foodgrains in 'cover and plinth' (CAP) storage are stored on elevated plinths and wooden crates are used as dunnage material. Stacks are properly covered with specifically fabricated low density black polythene water proof covers and tied with nylon ropes/nets.

(v) Regular inspections of the stocks/godowns are undertaken by qualified and trained staff.

(vi) The principle of 'First In First Out' (FIFO) is adopted to the extent possible so as to avoid longer storage of foodgrains in the godowns.

(vii) Only covered wagons are used for movement of foodgrains so as to avoid damages during transit.

Price Monitoring Cell

2060.SHRI BANWARI LAL KANCHHAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Price Monitoring Cell (PMC) was set up for monitoring and availability of essential commodities;

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether the rise in prices have been checked and whether the essential commodities are available freely;

(c) whether the prices of wheat, pulses and edible oils have risen manifold; and

(d) if so, the steps taken to bring down the rising prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) The Price Monitoring Cell (PMC) in the Department of Consumer Affairs is entrusted, *inter-alia,* with the task of monitoring the prices of 17 essential commodities in the country viz., rice, wheat, atta, gram, tur/arhar, masoor, moong, urad, tea, milk, sugar, vanaspati, mustard oil, groundnut oil, potato, onion and salt, based on the information received from the State Food and Civil Supplies Departments. Information on Retail Prices is received on daily basis from 27 centres of the country, and on Wholesale Prices from 37 centres of the country on weekly basis.

The PMC prepares agenda Notes for the consideration of high level meetings such as the High Powered Price Monitoring Board, Committee of Secretaries and the Cabinet Committee on Prices, which regularly review the prices and availability of essential commodities and recommend appropriate action.

(c) Retail prices of wheat, which was steady at Rs. 12 per kg in Delhi centre, for the last two year, has now shown a marginal increase of Rs. 1 per kg since mid of January 2008, prices stabilized at Rs. 13 per kg. Prices of pulses, especially of tur, urad and masoor dais, increased during the current year, largely on account of shortfall in production due to decline in acreage and crop damage in pulses growing regions. Retail prices of edible oils declined since the last six months.

Analysis of retail prices of pulses at Delhi centre is given below.

Retail price of tur dal which stabilized at Rs. 41 per kg since November 2007, started rising since mid June 2008 and is now Rs. 50 per kg. Retail price of urad dal which was steady at Rs. 37 per kg

since last year, started rising since end September 2008, reached a peak of Rs. 47 per kg during November 2008 and is now Rs. 46 per kg. Prices of gram dal are declining due to increased production. Retail price of gram dal which reached a peak level of Rs. 42.50 per kg during September 2006 is now reduced to Rs. 35 per kg. Retail price of moong dal, which was steady at Rs. 36 per kg since last six months, started rising since end September 2008, peaked at Rs. 47 per kg during November 2008 and has now declined to Rs. 45 per kg. Retail price of masoor dal show an upward trend and has now reached to Rs. 60 per kg.

(d) Government is aware of the increase in prices of pulses and rice and has been taking effective steps to bridge the gap between demand and supply of pulses. Government has taken a number of steps to control the price rise and to soften the impact of price rise on consumers. The important steps taken are given in the Statement.

Statement

Steps taken by Government

1. **Fiscal Measures**

(i) Reducing import duties to zero - for rice, wheat, pulses, edible oils (crude) and maize and butter and ghee;

(ii) Reducing import duties on refined hydrogenated oils and vegetable oils to 7.5%;

(iii) Imposing a 20 per cent import duty on crude soybean oil.

2. **Administrative Measures**

(i) Banning export of non-basmati rice, wheat, edible oils (except castor oil, coconut oil, oils produced from minor forest produce, except sesame oil and edible oils up to five kg branded pack) and pulses (except kabuli chana);

(ii) No changes in Tariff Rate Values of edible oils;

(iii) Imposition of stock limit orders in the case of paddy, rice, wheat, edible oils and oilseeds;

(iv) Reducing import duty on Skimmed Milk Powder (SMP) from 15% to 5%.

(v) Using Minimum Export Price (MEP) to regulate exports of onion (averaging at $280 per ton for November 2008) and basmati rice ($1200 PMT);

(vi) Maintaining the Central Issue Price (CIP) for rice (at Rs 5.65 per kg for BPL and Rs 3 per kg for AAY) and wheat (at Rs 4.15 per kg for BPL and Rs 2 per kg for AAY);

(vii) As a measure of abundant precaution, Forward Markets Commission (FMC) has on 23.01.07, directed the three National Exchanges, namely (a) Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd., (b) National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Ltd., (c) National Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd., to delist all contracts of tur and urad and to close out all outstanding positions in all Tur and Urad contracts at the closing price on 23.01.07. FMC has also stated that no further contract shall be launched without its prior approval and permission already granted to launch contracts in Urad and Tur stands withdrawn.

(viii) Similarly, FMC has on, 27.2.2007, directed all the three National Exchanges that no new futures contracts in wheat and rice shall be launched.

(ix) Reducing petrol and diesel prices by Rs 5 and Rs 2 a litre respectively, effective midnight of 5.12.08. However, LPG and diesel prices have not been changed.

Increase in ration quota for UP and Bihar

†2061. SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government has received requests from the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar for effecting an increase in the quota of items being provided in ration under the public distribution system;

(b) if so, the details of such items provided during the last three years along with the allocated quota thereof; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government on the demands of these States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (c) Item wise details of the requests received from the States of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar and the action taken by Government on the demands of these States are as under:

Foodgrains: Requests have been received from the State Government(s) of UP and Bihar for increasing allocation under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). Keeping in view the requests received from the State Government(s), the Central Government has made additional wheat allocation of 60,000 tons and 103,000 tons at APL rate for the State of UP and Bihar, respectively during current year. Also, 80,000 tons of wheat each for UP and Bihar have been released under Open Market Sale Scheme for sale to retail/bulk consumers during September to December, 2008.

Kerosene: Requests were received from the Governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh during the year 2007 for increasing the Kerosene quota. However, it could not be increased.

However, there has been no reduction in the PDS SKO to States/UTs after the financial year 2004-05. For the years 2005-06 to 2007-08, allocations have been maintained at the level of 2004-05, including additional allocations made during that year. Allocations for first three quarters of 2008-09 have also been maintained at the same level.

Sugar: No request has been received from the Government of UP and Bihar for increasing levy sugar quota of these States in the recent past.

Details of the quantum of allocation of rice, wheat, kerosene and Sugar provided by the Central Government for the PDS to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during last three years are as under:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.